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Spy expulsions chill East-West ties

By BARBARA REHM

Washington (News Bureau)—In the never-ending struggle between spies and counterspies, the expulsion of 47 Soviet officials from France on espionage charges last week reflects a new determination by the West to get tough with the Kremlin's omnipresent agents.

According to former French Interior Minister Michael Poniatowski, Paris touched only the tip of the iceberg of the East Bloc's worldwide espionage network, which includes as many as 10,000 spies in France alone and stretches across Europe, the United States and Japan.

These spies are a new breed—and their main weapon is the photocopier, he says. Their targets are the industrial, technological and commercial secrets that give allied weapons systems—the advanced F-16 fighter bomber for example—superiority over Soviet weapons.

THE FRENCH crackdown, which

netted the chief of KGB operations in France, Nikolai Chetverikov, was the largest and most public of a series of Western expulsions in recent days. The moves have brought a new chill in East-West relations and come at a particularly sensitive time in Europe, what with the impasse in U.S.-Soviet missile talks in Geneva and the first installation of U.S. nuclear missiles due in December.

So far, Western Europe has remained firm in its determination to play as tough as the Soviets when it comes to deployment of the 572 Pershing-2 and ground cruise missiles. But European and U.S. officials concede that the next few weeks will be critical as construction gets under way for the new missile sites and massive antinuclear opposition begins to spread. Top U.S. officials are concerned about the pressure on allied governments to back off the missile agreement once demonstrators take to the streets.

TO THAT END, the U.S. has sent a team of intelligence experts over to

Europe to help governments crack down on Soviet "disinformation" campaigns aimed primarily at anti-nuclear organizations, which staged huge demonstrations across Europe over the Easter weekend.

With the impasse in U.S.-Soviet arms negotiations, Washington also has encouraged European governments to get tough with Soviet high-tech spies. The purpose is obvious: To block Moscow from improving its weapons systems with stolen Western technology.

In late March, the Paris government arrested a Frenchman said to have passed industrial secrets from state-owned firms to members of the Soviet Embassy in Paris. A few days later, three Soviet officials were deported from Britain. About the same time, four members of the Soviet Embassy left Madrid, accused of military espionage. In February, West Germany arrested Gennado Batashev—believed to head the KGB network in the country—outside Cologne Cathedral after a double agent handed him secret information on a decoding machine used by West Germany.

THAT SAME MONTH, Italy expelled the assistant commercial director of the Rome office of Aeroflot, the Soviet airline. The Italians also continue to press ahead with their investigation of the alleged "Bulgarian connection," which some sources contend link the Kremlin to the 1981 shooting of the Pope.